National Symptoms.

A

DISCOURSE

PREACHED IN THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, NEW HAVEN,

ON THE

Day of the Annual State Fast,

APRIL 18, 1862.

BY S. D. PHELPS,
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH

NEW YORK:
SHELDON & COMPANY, 335 BROADWAY.
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CORRESPONDENCE.

New Haven, *May* 17*th*, 1862.

Rev. S. D. Phelps, D. D.

Dear Sir:—The undersigned, most of whom had the pleasure of listening to your highly interesting and patriotic Discourse delivered on the late State Fast Day, would respectfully solicit a copy of the same for publication.

G. O. SUMNER,
M. MOULTHROP,
CHAS. CARLISLE,
D. S. COOPER,
S. M. WIER,
N. W. MOORE,
H. KILLAM,
F. R. BLISS,
JAMES FAIRMAN.

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New Haven, *May* 20, 1862.

Gentlemen:—The Sermon whose publication you have had the kindness to solicit, was prepared for its occasion in addition to the usual labors of the week, and without a thought of its being printed. I submit it as it was delivered—a minute entered on the record of our remarkable times—without the change of a sentence, and with only here and there a verbal alteration.

Yours, very truly,

S. D. PHELPS.

G. O. Sumner, M. D., and others.

NATIONAL SYMPTOMS.

ISAIAH XXI. 11, 12.—*Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night.*

A YEAR of civil war in our county we never expected to witness. But it is now a matter of experience and history. Twelve months ago the present week, were heard those first awful sounds that swept through a shuddering land, and stirred the hearts of the people as nothing else had ever done. Sumter bombarded — Sumter fallen—the President's proclamation for seventy-five thousand volunteers to defend the Capital, and aid in suppressing the rebellion—the rush to arms of the patriots of the North—the insolent boasts of rebel leaders in the South—the bloody scene in the streets of Baltimore:—these events are all fresh in every memory, and can never fade. And what a year of history, of trial, of fear and hope, they ushered in! Can it be that only a year has passed since those events startled us! It seems sometimes, in the occurrences and changes intervening, that we must have lived almost an age since then. What volumes of history have been made in the meantime!

A year ago, I improved the occasion of the State Fast in a discourse from the words of the prophet Joel: (ii. 2) "A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds

and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong: there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations." It seemed prophetic, and it was. The war had not then broken out, as the Fast was three weeks earlier than this year; but the sky was all clouded over, and the thunder ready to burst. The gloomy night was at hand, and we have been passing through its darkness and sorrow. And now standing at the end of this eventful year, there seems to be a voice calling as in the text: "Watchman, what of the night?"

The night we have been passing through had been long gathering. Many did not see it—did not believe it would come—thought the clouds would be blown away. Others had their profound fears, their sad apprehensions. They saw causes at work, positions taken, landmarks abandoned, compacts broken, human rights and Divine law so outraged, that retribution, the day of visitation, and national humiliation, and the judgments of Heaven, were ere long expected. Some great and awful disaster seemed approaching. The mutterings of the coming storm, the rumblings of the distant thunder were heard.

When one is out on mid-ocean during a cold, foggy, tempestuous day, tossed on the angry waves, and you can scarcely see the length of the ship—how gloomy, how foreboding is the coming on of night! You know it must come—it is inevitable—its deep shadows are gathering—its dark shroud falls around you, and there is no relief in clear sky, sweet star, or blessed moon. It is an oppressive reality, that you cannot help, nor

escape. Such was the gathering of the night, the shutting down of the gloom, in our political horizon something over a year ago—during the latter part of the last and the opening of the present administrations. Treason was ripening and going to seed. Traitors had every thing their own way—strangling the government with scarcely a rebuke, certainly with no earnest effort to repel, stop or punish the daring iniquity. Oaths violated—the Flag dishonored—the Union broken. O it was a terrible darkness that was falling upon us!

The night went on. Cloud on cloud passed over or hung darkly in our sky. Thunders broke amid the gloom, and lightning gleamed wildly over the scene. How we longed for the morning! and how it was delayed! What fears—with gleams of hope now and then like a silver lining to the clouds—oppressed us! The war deepened, and the evidences of its dread reality every where met us. The daily drill; the passing troops; friends enlisting; regiment after regiment moving off to the scenes of action; battles; defeats; disasters and blunders; the taunts and scorn of foreign nations, joined by traitors at home; friends fallen, and sorrow and tears at many a desolate fireside—ah! these were scenes and experiences early in the year that can never be adequately described.

"Watchman, what of the night? Foreboding, inevitable, gloomy, awful, and almost hopeless! Yet it was necessary. We deserved it. Our nation was guilty in God's sight—proud, boastful, corrupt, devoted to Mammon, losing its patriotism, its virture, its liberties even; and nothing but the discipline of chastisement, humiliation, and sufferings, seemed adequate to restore its man-

hood, and bring it to an appreciation of its goodly heritage. It is in this world a part of the order of Divine Providence to purify and strengthen by trial; to bring good out of evil, and life from death. Pure air and bright flowers are born of storms.

> "The night is mother of the day,
> The winter of the spring:
> And ever upon old decay,
> The greenest mosses cling."

So we believe a New and brighter Day will spring from this National night of ours. Its symptoms already appear. Its streaks of dawn gild the horizon. The first anniversary of the war comes with events as startling as those that marked its beginning, and far more propitious.

"What of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night." Yes, there is a morning to break upon this terrible night, ushering in a glorious day. There is a night also coming, in which the daring and wicked treason and its abettors shall be involved and overwhelmed. Their "day" of hope and prospect of success already "goeth away, and the shadows of evening are stretched out," and their cry must soon be, "Woe unto us!" What then are some of these better National Symptoms; these indications of a coming day of blessing, peace, and more enduring prosperity?

I recognize it in a newly awakened spirit of *Patriotism*. A beneficent government can truly live and prosper only in the respect and affections of the people. While the Revolutionary Fathers were with us, and we

heard from them the story of the struggles, trials and sacrifices endured to establish our independence, the fire of our patriotism was fanned, and our love of liberty was strong. But with their departure, and our unparalleled national growth and wealth, and great facilities for personal advancement and profit, many had almost forgotten the cost and value of their civil privileges, and scarcely dreamed that they could ever be seriously endangered. The Government was too much left to itself, or rather to the management of designing and ambitious politicians. One point was yielded here and another there, rather than injure trade or party interests. But now all this is changed. When at length Treason struck down the Flag, the old slumbering spirit of patriotism inherited from our fathers was roused, and the people of the Free States, and at length many of the Border, rose in their majesty to defend the Constitution and the country. This wonderful uprising of united and earnest millions in support of their imperiled institutions is one of the grandest exhibitions in the history of nations. It was like an inspiration from God, and with His blessing, it will at length utterly crush the rebellion.

I also see the coming of the New Day of peace and prosperity, in the sublime *Patience* of an excited and restless people. When disaster followed disaster, and we scarcely knew in whom to repose confidence; when no definite policy seemed to characterize our leaders; when our movements, from inexperience in war, and the want of its material, were tardy and apparently inefficient, as we came in contact with the foe—still, the people, with a commendable tenacity of endurance, "learned to labor and to wait." There were no mobs,

no riots, no mutinies; but a disposition to abide by the councils and plans of those in authority—even when personal liberties were abridged, and some despotic customs were resorted to for the public safety. Such were the inherent love of law and practical obedience to those in authority, that the people endured, toiled, and hoped on, with a steadfast faith in the Government and its ultimate triumph, believing that our institutions would emerge from this temporary eclipse, and shine even with a brighter luster than before. This law-abiding stability is full of promise and hope.

Another favorable symptom was a wide sense of *Humiliation and Dependence on God.* Our pride was humbled—our prestige had waned—our boasting and vain-glorying had received a most decided check. At home and abroad, we were no longer what we had been, and the departing of our glory was most keenly felt. Yet we had erred and sinned against God by our arrogant spirit, and our self-importance and supposed invincibility. We had now a painful sense of our weakness, and the lesson was salutary. In a good degree our humiliation was that which precedes a better and more truly exalted spirit. We were led to look to God. Rulers and people humbled themselves before Him, and He has begun to lift us up. Our shame is passing away. Our enemies at home and abroad are better appreciating our character and purposes, and changing their tone in regard to us. To be led to feel our dependence on God, and to trust more implicitly in Him, and more earnestly seek His favor and merciful interposition, is a good and most valuable lesson, though learned in a school of self-abasement and severity. If

God be on our side, we shall pass safely through the conflict, and even be blessed by it.

I behold the dawn of a Better Day in the gathering *Resources and Indomitable Bravery* of our hardy and industrious people. Left in a partially impoverished and defenceless state, by the traitors when they abandoned their places in the Government for the purpose of more effectually destroying it—without a navy at hand or an army, or a treasury—yet how astonishing have been our resources! How soon was an army raised, the finest the world has ever seen, and abundant munitions supplied! How effective has been our Navy! How fruitful our means for maintaining all these magnificent preparations for our defence, and for recovering the revolted States! All the prophecies of home and foreign foes have been proved false; and the world looks on in astonishment at the resources and abilities of our loyal, patriotic and liberty-loving people; and that world is now learning important lessons—and will soon doubtless more rapidly learn them—of the inherent value and mighty power of republican institutions. If a free government is on its trial, it is not that the "bubble may burst," but that the precious boon may appear the more precious and take a deeper hold on the minds of men, while old tottering aristocracies and oppressions shall appear the more odious by the contrast. Our hardy and enterprising people show their power, under God, to resist their overbearing enemies, and to vindicate their rights and privileges before the world. Never before in so short a period were such vast capabilities shown.

God signals the coming Morn by *His manifest Interpositions* in our behalf. Time would fail to enumerate

the instances where the Divine Hand has been most distinctly interposed to aid or defend us. Who shall say that He did not permit our severest reverses to come upon us as blessings in disguise? Did we not need just the lessons they taught?—just the discipline they furnished? Did not good come out of them? Did they not lead us to a better knowledge of the foe, and of our necessities to successfully resist and conquer, as well as to lead us to trust less in man and more in God? How graciously has the Lord of Hosts dealt with us in our protection when most exposed! Twice might the Capital have been taken by the enemy with comparative ease—just before the troops arrived after the first proclamation of the President, and immediately after the disgraceful rout at Bull Run. But God held that enemy in check. How mercifully He preserved our fleets in those awful storms to which they were exposed on the way to Port Royal and Roanoke! It is a marvel that there were no more disasters. The rebels prayed for their destruction by the wind and the sea; and when the tempests appeared, they thought their prayers were answered. The safety and success of our fleets under such circumstances, should have been an impressive rebuke to the traitors, and should have inspired profound gratitude on our part for so signal a Divine protection. Three striking instances of Providential interposition are of more recent occurrence. Who does not plainly see God's hand in having the *Monitor* arrive at Hampton Roads at the very moment she did? Had she been a day later—had the Merrimac been allowed to come out a day sooner—who can tell how much more disastrous might have been the result? or how incalculable might have been the mischief of the rebel monster! She

had in one day shown her capabilities for awful devastation, and only waited through the night to resume her terrible work in the morning, when she was unexpectedly met and repulsed by the little Monitor, that like another David engaged and more than matched the huge Goliath. The rise and overflow of the Mississippi, allowing transports to be taken below island Number Ten, and the river falling the day after this was done, so that it would then have been impracticable, is a clear manifestation, with the remarkable results that followed, of special Divine favor. So, in the battle at Pittsburg Landing, how near our army came of utter defeat! The rebel leader saw his opportunity, and desecrated the Sabbath to secure his object. Had he made the attack a day sooner, as he intended, the result must have been most disastrous to us. It was our reinforcements the second day that turned the tide of victory and drove the enemy from the field. God interposed to save us! We have had repeated illustrations "that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;" but that there is an over-ruling Providence in this conflict, directing and controlling its issues; and hence how appropriate the orders of the Secretary of War, the President and our Governor, for prayers of thanksgiving last Sabbath to the Lord of Hosts for His signal interposition in our behalf!

The morning cometh evidently, from the present aspects of the ever-perplexing *Slavery* question. There is now increasing hope of our ultimately becoming a free nation. Light gleams upon this problem, so difficult of solution. I have always taken the liberty on suitable occasions, to speak on the subject of Slavery from the pulpit, as I thought the Word of God and duty required.

I have always denounced it as contrary to the spirit of our holy religion and the Bible, and as detrimental and dangerous to our Government. In my first Fast-day Sermon, preached here seventeen years ago, on "Our Heritage, and the Dangers that Threaten it," (Joel ii. 17) I spoke of the system of slavery, as a sin against God and a great wrong to His creatures, and a growing evil that, unless it should be checked, threatened the over throw of our free institutions and the destruction of our Union. We see now what that system has done, in this great and wicked rebellion undertaken in its interest. It has aspired to the supreme power in this country; but now, under God, it seems likely to fail utterly, and work its own overthrow, and at length eradication from the land. It has revealed its monstrous character, and committed suicide, we trust. How, but through this war, brought on by its own lust of dominion, could its power in our Government ever have been broken! How, otherwise, would the national Capital and its precincts been freed from its curse and shame? How else, that proposal for its gradual removal from the Border States at least, without compulsion or the infraction of any rights, been accepted? The Hand of God is evident here, and He is solving a question that has baffled the wisest of men, and removing the most terrible evil and foe of our country. I pity those who do not wish to see all just and lawful measures used to remove this tremendous curse from our land. This civil war, with all its horrors and sorrows, would not have been, but for the attempts to extend and practically enthrone this despotic oppression in our country. It is an honor to be an abolitionist in the sense of desiring its removal in a Christian and constitutional way. It is to be in the

company of Washington and other early patriots and Presidents of the Republic.

Another benefit to result from the present conflict will be *a better knowledge at the South of the Northern character*, purposes and enterprise. The presence of our armies in that section, their habits and appearance, and their grand object, the restoration of the Old Flag once loved by all, will break and dispel the illusions and falsehoods under which so many of the southern people labor. They see in our soldiers very different men, in intelligence, true manhood, and bravery, from what they have been taught to believe. The acquaintance must be productive of good. Many of their soldiers, captured by our arms and brought north, will learn valuable lessons. The rebels already disheartened, and paralyzed by their defeats at home and failure of substantial sympaty abroad—many of them confessing their error in beginning the war—betokens the coming end of the struggle. Their failure will have a most beneficial effect on their own character, curing or correcting many of its serious defects, and leading them to better appreciate a good government.

The expenses and taxation to which the loyal States must submit in consequence of the war, though severely felt for a while, may result in good. It will cure many foolish and ruinous extravagances into which our people were running. It will induce economical expenditures in the Government, as well as among individuals, and so prevent frauds and reform abuses. And when there are such vast natural resources as our country affords, with so rapid an increase of population and wealth, the burden will every year grow lighter, and ere long disappear. And while our precious institutions cost us some-

thing of sacrifice and means, they will perhaps be better appreciated and the more jealously guarded.

Another beneficial result of this great struggle, in which so much of suffering and calamity are necessarily involved, will no doubt be a great increase of *physical and manly vigor* in our people. We were said to be degenerating and becoming effeminate, through luxury and ease, and so less adapted to the great enterprizes which Providence seems to have reserved for this country. Camp life has its exposures and vices; and while some fall and die, others will become the hardier and stronger, both in physical endurance and in moral vigor. God had prepared thousands of our young men, by the great and blessed revival of religion of four years ago, for the scenes of this conflict; and their discipline in it will make them moral and Christian heroes; and the good and stalwart influences resulting will be felt for generations to come. We shall be made also a more homogeneous people by this war. National and sectional jealousies and prejudices will melt away, and Yankees, Germans, and Irish, eastern mechanics and western farmers, northern yeomen and border-state planters, will be Americans all, brought into closer sympathies and united by the mighty ties of patriotism, cemented on common battle-fields, and consecrated by common sacrifices and sufferings. Great and lasting, though dearly bought, will be this blessing.

The final result, I doubt not, will be, that this night of trial and sorrows will precede a glorious day in which there shall be *a purer and more stable Republicanism* in this country, a juster and fairer *Liberty for all*, our Government emerging from the severe trial, surrounded with a brighter halo, the stars and stripes

all restored, the dear Banner having a new and more precious significance from its terrible baptism of blood, and finding in the hearts of all the people in every section a deeper and purer love and veneration, and claiming abroad a respect hitherto unknown, as the symbol of a freedom and power that despots will more and more fear, and the aspirants for liberty will most sacredly cherish. The prophets of our downfall and imbecility will hide their heads in shame, and those who were our friends in adversity will receive due honor.

A year ago the foundation of the Southern Confederacy was laid. Slavery was its acknowledged and boasted corner-stone. It was to grow, taking in at length all the South, the West, the Middle States, and contemptuously excluding New England from the New Dynasty that was to rule the Continent. New England men, institutions, and ideas were deemed unworthy to take part in this grand national drama! But see what God hath wrought in one year! O ye foolish and arrogant builders! the stone which ye disdainfully rejected, is fast becoming the head-stone of the corner! Never in our history were the spirit and principles of the Pilgrim Fathers, and their liberty-loving descendents, so prevalent in our land as to-day. It is represented in the hardy sons of the West, and makes its power felt in every battle on land and water, and in the controlling legislation of the country. The South itself is being colonized and regenerated by the North as the consequence of this war. Washington City is renovated, and now exhibits the enterprize and prosperity of northern cities. It is no longer a slave-pen, and a mere dead skeleton of giant proportions; but takes on muscle, life and thrift, as becomes the heart of a great and free

nation. This war, waged by its instigators in the interest of human bondage, has done more to break down that system, and has freed more slaves in one year, than all other agencies seemed likely to accomplish in a lifetime. Indeed, slavery can never regain its former power, but must in time pass away, as utterly at variance with the fundamental principles of our Republic and the moral sense of the civilized world, and no doubt abhorrent to God, who seems to be over-ruling the wrath of man for its overthrow. Let us this day gratefully acknowledge His Hand and rule, and with humiliation, fasting and prayer prostrate ourselves before Him and beseech the pardon of our individual and national sins, and still implore His gracious and signal interposition in behalf of our beloved country. Let us be glad that the morning seems to be coming. The night of our trial and sorrow is passing, while the night of rebellion deepens in its abysmal gloom, and in which its leaders shall sink to rise no more. O blessed Day of death to Treason and Slavery, come! O glorious Day of a brighter Liberty, and a freer Land, over all which the starry folds of our dear Banner shall wave in triumph and peace, come! Come, O longed-for Day of Righteousness, and thou conquering Prince of Salvation, come!

"Truth for every eye is shining, in the fullness of that day;
Joy and Hope, descended angels, rest, no more to pass away;
Freedom comes and lifts the captive from the dungeon of his woe,
And all streams of mortal being, deeper, purer, sweeter flow.

"There the sword is hid in darkness, there the trumpet's piercing tone
Wakes the quiet world no longer, when the blast of war is blown;
Peace unfurls her snowy banner, and by all the breezes fanned,
Lo! it waves in wondrous beauty, from the towers of the land."

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